

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is the adoption of the Forest Resource Plan for 1992-2002 by the Washington State Board of Natural Resources. If approved by the Board, the Department of Natural Resources will execute the plan.

2.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

The plan is the department's chief policy and planning document. It will guide the department in managing 2.1 million acres of state forest land.

There have been many significant changes in the management of Washington's forests since the previous document, the Forest Land Management Program, was adopted by the Board in 1984. In the last 10 years, new Forest Practices Act regulations, the listing of the Northern Spotted Owl as a threatened species, and pressures to convert forest land for development have brought about significant changes in the way state forest land is managed. The department believes a new planning document will allow it to better address the challenges of the 1990s and meet its responsibilities to the public and the trust beneficiaries.

2.3 THE BOARD OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Board of Natural Resources must approve the Forest Resource Plan and final environmental impact statement before they take effect. The board establishes policies to ensure that the acquisition, management and disposition of lands and resources within the department's jurisdiction are based on sound principles.

The board is composed of six members: the Commissioner of Public Lands, who chairs the board; the Governor; the Superintendent of Public Instruction; the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Washington State University; the Dean of the College of Forest Resources, the University of Washington; and an elected representative from a county that contains Forest Board land.

2.4 MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE FOREST RESOURCE PLAN

The Forest Resource Plan consists of four major components: 1) trust asset management; 2) forest land planning; 3) silviculture; and 4) implementation. Each component is addressed in both the plan and FEIS.

2.5 SUMMARY OF MAJOR POLICIES

1. The department, as trustee, manages state forest lands for the public institutions that are the trust beneficiaries. The department will give priority to its trust responsibilities.
2. The department will manage state forest lands to produce a sustainable, even-flow harvest of timber.
3. The department manages diverse forest lands with diverse management needs. The department will therefore manage its lands at different levels of intensity depending on biological productivity and economic potential.
4. The department will identify state forest lands that have special ecological features (such as exceptional wetlands or stands of older timber) which fill critical gaps in ecosystem diversity, and it will seek legislation and funding to move these lands from trust ownership to a protective status.
5. The department will reduce the impacts of clearcutting by generally limiting the size of harvest areas to 100 acres and by requiring a "green-up" (buffer) on adjacent areas.
6. The department will comply fully with all laws of general applicability and in some instances will provide greater protection of soils, water and other public resources than the law requires.
7. The department recognizes that the forests it manages for income also exist as complex natural ecosystems. This perspective guides the department's efforts in protecting forest health, wildlife habitat and aquatic systems.
8. The department manages lands that adjoin many other ownerships, large and small. The department strives to be a good and responsible neighbor, respecting the needs and opinions of adjacent landowners.
9. Some department-managed forest lands in growing regions of the state can act as a buffer to the spread of development and provide beneficial open space for communities. The department recognizes the importance of these properties and will work with local governments to coordinate mutually beneficial actions.

2.6 SUMMARY OF PROBABLE MAJOR IMPACTS

1. The department will likely harvest between 450 and 840 million board feet of timber per year (equivalent roughly to 20,000 and 35,000 acres). These harvest levels are based on sustainable, even-flow calculations that seek to reduce major fluctuations in the annual volumes harvested from state forest land. (See Policy No. 4 for more information.) The department has not completed its final calculations for the 1990s, and these figures will likely change, perhaps substantially.

2. The department will use a variety of silvicultural practices to produce a growing forest. **Table 2** lists the major silvicultural practices the department is expected to employ in the 1990s and their projected annual usage (in acres). The acreage in some categories (herbicide use and slash burning, for instance) represents a substantial decrease from prior years.

3. The department is currently deferring (postponing) from harvest approximately 19,400 acres of timber.

Of this sum, about 15,000 acres of mature natural stands are in the proposed Olympic Experimental State Forest and will be deferred for 15 years. An additional 2,000 acres in Old Growth Research Areas will be deferred for 10 years, and 2,417 acres of native gene pool reserves will be deferred indefinitely.

4. The department is currently restricting harvest on approximately 63,250 acres to provide habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl, a threatened species. This number is subject to change.

2.7 MITIGATION

1. The department will discharge its responsibilities under the Forest Practices Act to reforest harvested lands with healthy trees. As trustee, it is in the interests of the department to return the land to full production as quickly as possible. The Forest Practices Act requires all landowners to reforest harvested areas within a specified period.

2. The department will provide greater protection to aquatic systems, such as watersheds, wetlands and riparian areas, and it will reduce or modify its activities (such as road construction and timber harvest) in those areas to lessen the adverse effect on natural resources.

TABLE 2
Major Silvicultural Practices
Projected Acres

Type of Activity:	Projected Practices:
	(In Acres Treated Per Year)

Site Preparation*

No treatment	7,300
Burning	500
Aerial Herbicides	800
Ground Herbicides	20
Manual	200
Mechanical	200

Reforestation

Planting	14,000
Natural	5,000
Aerial Seeding	50

Vegetation Control

No treatment	14,300
Aerial Herbicides	3,500
Ground Herbicides	3,000
Manual (slashing)	7,000
Animal Damage Control	300

Other Activities

Precomm. Thinning	7,500
Fertilizing	5,000

* Site preparation activities take place after timber harvest to prepare for reforestation.

3. In addition, the department will give greater emphasis to protecting wildlife and endangered, threatened and sensitive species. It is not possible to quantify the effect of these efforts, but the department plans to reduce or modify its activities to lessen the adverse effect on these resources.

4. The department will require a "green up" (buffer) next to areas scheduled for clearcuts to reduce visual and other impacts.

5. Finally, the department has listed and analyzed specific mitigation measures in Chapter 8 of this document. See mitigation for earth (page 175), air (page 178), water (page 184), protection of flora (page 195) and protection of fauna (page 208).

2.8 UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

1. Some erosion and damage to soils is probably unavoidable during the course of extensive harvest operations, such as those conducted by the department in the next 10 years on state forest land. The department cannot quantify this loss and will make all reasonable attempts to mitigate or prevent significant losses.

2. Some loss of wildlife habitat is probably unavoidable during harvest operations. The department cannot quantify this loss, and it will make all reasonable attempts to mitigate or prevent significant losses, particularly to species that have been identified as endangered, threatened or sensitive.

3. Some impact to water quality is probably unavoidable during the course of extensive harvest operations. Harvesting timber may introduce sediment and nutrients to surface water, though these impacts are expected to be temporary.

2.9 RESERVING IMPLEMENTATION FOR FUTURE DATE

The department has considered the benefits and disadvantages of reserving for some future date the implementation of the proposed policies, as compared with possible approval at this time.

Because of significant developments in the timber industry, including the federal government decision to list the Northern Spotted Owl as a threatened species, the continuing pressures to convert forest land to other uses and the recently-enacted federal restrictions on log exports, the department believes that a new set of policies are needed for state forest land.

The prior document, the Forest Land Management Program (1984), is now out of date. The department does not believe it is foreclosing future options by asking the Board of Natural Resources to approve the Forest Resource Plan at the present time.

The department recognizes that the Forest Resource Plan should be a dynamic document, responding to changes likely to occur in the 1990s. If new developments in the coming years suggest the plan should be revised, the department will bring these proposed changes to the Board for approval.

2.10 SIGNIFICANT AREAS OF CONTROVERSY AND UNCERTAINTY

The department has identified three significant areas of controversy and uncertainty that may affect the plan and FEIS.

1. Endangered Species Act. The federal government has listed the Northern Spotted Owl as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act. Because of this listing, the department has restricted harvesting timber on approximately 63,250 acres. The department is cooperating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which enforces the Endangered Species Act, and with other state agencies. It is not known how long these harvest restrictions will last.

The department is participating in the federal Owl Recovery Plan, which may affect harvest restrictions within the existing owl habitat areas and elsewhere on state forest land. For more information, see discussion of the owl at pages 203-207.

2. Watersheds. In this plan, the department commits to analyze the cumulative impact of its activities on water quantity and quality, wildlife, soils and other nontimber resources within watersheds. This requirement is a new policy and addresses concerns about the rate of harvest within watersheds.

3. Harvest methods. Selection of harvest methods (particularly clearcutting) is a concern to the public and land managers. In this plan, the department recognizes that Forest Practices Act regulations on the subject are changing. It will meet or exceed these regulations.

2.11 SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FROM THE DEIS

The department received comments on the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) from industry, state organizations, tribes, environmental groups and individuals.

In response to some theses and to additional suggests from department staff, the following significant changes were made to the DEIS and are reflected in the final document:

1. The number of the policies have changed to make for easier reading. Each policy is now numbered in order. **TABLE 2A** lists the policies as they appeared in the DEIS and the new policies in the final environmental impact statement (FEIS).
2. A new policy on Eastern Washington ownership groups (Policy No. 7). See page 57.
3. A new policy on the genetic resource (Policy No. 15). See page 69.
4. A significantly-changed policy on wildlife (Policy No. 22). See page 84.
5. The recreation policy, which had been part of the Trust Asset section, has been moved to the Forest Land Planning section (but remains unchanged). See page 96.
6. A significantly-changed discussion of Policy No. 16 (Landscape Planning) that attempts to better explain how the department's new planning policy will work and interrelate with other policies in the Forest Resource Plan. See page 71.
7. The discussion section of Policy No. 4 (Sustainable, Even-Flow Timber Harvest) describes in more detail the regulatory and operational restraints that are expected to reduce the department's harvest estimates for the 1990s. See page 29.
8. The discussion section in Policy No. 4 also explains in more detail why practicing only a sustained yield harvest (rather than sustainable, even-flow) would allow the department to fluctuate timber harvest significantly and risk unduly favoring present beneficiaries over future ones, or vice versa. See 29.
9. The discussion in Policy No. 4 has also been revised to explain in more detail why the department seeks to even-flow timber harvest rather than income (cash) from timber sales. See page 29.
10. A new table in the discussion section for Policy No. 6 (Western Washington ownership groups) explains why the change in ownership groups will not increase or decrease harvest levels substantially in the coming decade. See page 38.
11. A new table (Table 20A) containing acreage and volume estimates for state forest land in Eastern Washington. See page 58.

TABLE 2A
Changes in Policy Number

<u>DEIS</u>	<u>FEIS</u>
General Management Policy No. 1	Policy No. 1
General Management Policy No. 2	Policy No. 2
General Management Policy No. 3	Policy No. 3
Harvest Policy No. 1	Policy No. 4
Harvest Policy No. 2	Policy No. 5
Harvest Policy No. 3	Policy No. 6
*	Policy No. 7
Harvest Policy No. 4	Policy No. 8
Trust Asset Protection Policy No.1	Policy No. 9
Trust Asset Protection Policy No. 2	Policy No. 10
Financial Policy No. 1	Policy No. 11
Financial Policy No. 2	Policy No. 12
Special Lands Policy No. 1	Policy No. 13
Special Lands Policy No. 2	Policy No. 14
*	Policy No. 15
Landscape Planning Policy No. 1	Policy No. 16
Landscape Planning Policy No. 2	Policy No. 17
SEPA Policy No. 1	Policy No. 18
Aquatic Systems Policy No. 1	Policy No. 19
Aquatic Systems Policy No. 2	Policy No. 20
Aquatic Systems Policy No. 3	Policy No. 21
Wildlife Habitat Policy No. 1	Policy No. 22
Endangered Species Policy No. 1	Policy No. 23
Historic Sites Policy No. 1	Policy No. 24
Public Access Policy No. 1	Policy No. 25
Public Access Policy No. 2	Policy No. 26
Public Access Policy No. 3	Policy No. 27
Public Access Policy No. 4	Policy No. 28
Recreation Policy No. 1	Policy No. 29
Silviculture Policy No. 1	Policy No. 30
Silviculture Policy No. 2	Policy No. 31
Silviculture Policy No. 3	Policy No. 32
Silviculture Policy No. 4	Policy No. 33
Silviculture Policy No. 5	Policy No. 34
Implementation Policy No. 1	Policy No. 35
Implementation Policy No. 2	Policy No. 36
Implementation Policy No. 3	Policy No. 37
Implementation Policy No. 4	Policy No. 38
Implementation Policy No. 5	Policy No. 39
Implementation Policy No. 6	Policy No. 40

* New policy. There was no similar policy in the DEIS.